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NEWS RELEASE

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Tests Show Rhode Island Students Improve in Mathematics and in 4th-Grade Reading

The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2007 tests, released today (September 25th, 2007), show that Rhode Island public-school students have improved in mathematics in both 4th grade and 8th grade and have improved in 4th-grade reading.

The results from the 2007 test – sometimes called “The Nation’s Report Card” – show that 80 percent of the state’s 4th graders and 65 percent of the state’s 8th graders have reached the “basic achievement level” in mathematics. The 4th graders improved by 4 percentage points since 2005, the last administration of the test. The 8th graders improved by 2 points since 2005.

The results show that 65 percent of the 4th graders have reached the basic achievement level in reading, up 3 percentage points. Among 8th graders, 69 percent have reached the basic achievement level in reading, down 2 points.

Some of the greatest improvements were among student groups that have trailed the state average: black students, Hispanic students, and students living in poverty. In grade-4 mathematics, for example, black students improved by 13 percentage points, Hispanic students by 14 points, and students in poverty by 8 points. Similar gains were seen in all tests except for grade-8 reading.

“Improving public education in Rhode Island is one of my administration's top priorities,” said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. “In that light, I’m particularly pleased to see the increase in mathematics scores among black and Hispanic 4th graders and among students receiving free or reduced-cost lunch. These populations have traditionally faced serious challenges compared with other Rhode Island students. These results show that we are beginning to make some progress in closing the achievement gap.

“We still have work before us, however,” the Governor continued. “While some of our 4th-grade scores are improving, they remain at about the national average, and our 8th-grade scores are still below the national average. We can do better than that.

“Over the last five years, we have initiated some critical reforms to our education system that are only now beginning to come on line to affect student performance. From lengthening the school day to developing a statewide curriculum in English, mathematics, and science to collaborating on more effective tests – all these education-reform measures will help drive the improvements our students need and deserve.”

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“Although we certainly have more work to do, I am glad to see that Rhode Island mathematics scores have improved across the board and that the reading scores have improved at the 4th-grade level,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “I believe that thanks to the reform efforts initiated by the Governor, the Regents, and the General Assembly, we are well positioned to see our state test scores continue to rise.”

“Over the past five years, Rhode Island has adopted new state learning standards in English and mathematics and begun a new system of state tests that are linked to those standards,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “This alignment of standards and testing is yielding positive results, as we see our NAEP scores rising on three of the four tests. We expect to see continued improvement as we work together to bring all of our students to proficiency.”

The NCES does not rank state results, but places each state into one of three tiers. On all four tests, Rhode Island is placed in the middle tier, as in previous years.

In both reading and mathematics, the Rhode Island 4th-grade scores are one point below the national average. Rhode Island grade-8 reading is four points below the national average and grade-8 mathematics is 5 points below the national average.

More details about the 2007 Rhode Island NAEP results, including breakdowns by student groups, will be posted on the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Web site, www.ride.ri.gov, see under Offices: Assessment and Accountability.

The NCES has posted information about the NAEP results on its site: <http://nationsreportcard.gov>

Note: Commissioner McWalters will be available for interviews this afternoon (Tuesday, Sept. 25th).

